

OUT OF BOUNDS:

Foreign and Digital Influence Targeting
LGBTI Rights in Ghana



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Signify Group Limited provided online analysis and research for this report, using machine learning to assess the impact of various campaigns and media narratives, and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) to explore the connections between various actors and groups.



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Foreword

On January 24, 2023, Ghana appeared before the Human Rights Council of the United Nations to elaborate on actions it has taken to improve the human rights of its citizens. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was the country's fourth, and happened at a time when the Ghanaian Parliament was considering one of the harshest bills against sexual minorities in Africa. Introduced as a Private Members Bill, this pernicious anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has been mischaracterized as "The Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, 2021."

The bill seeks to criminalize LGBTQ+ relationships and associations as well as those who fight for LGBTQ+ rights, and places a duty on people and institutions, including the media, to report offenders to the police and help investigate and prosecute them. It also places liability on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram should they allow on their platforms material that supports LGBTQ+ activities and rights.

Sponsored by eight members of parliament, the bill's foremost supporters are religious groups and traditional leaders who repeatedly argue homosexuality is alien to Ghanaian culture and that its practice and spread is Western influenced and financed. As this report clearly documents, however, foreign interests are themselves the impetus for a bill driven by right-wing, mostly evangelical Christian groups in the U.S. that are on a strategic anti-rights mission around the world, and that, with the cooperation of its politicians, have set their sights on Ghana.

The Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Godfred Dame, has made public assurances that Ghana is committed to protecting all its citizens, including LGBTQ+ persons, but the government has done very little to address the unprecedented wave of violent physical and verbal attacks unleashed on the LGBTQ+ community since the bill's introduction last year. On the contrary, I heard Dame in an interview he gave on national television, making transphobic remarks and stating that bisexuality was criminal and that he was "seriously anti-gay." (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rozxkUcvuCA>).

Traditional media coverage has also shown journalists' antipathy towards the LGBTQ+ community, with a group called Journalists Against LGBTQ+

unabashedly leading and encouraging police swoops and public attacks on suspected LGBTQ+ gatherings.

Ghana prides itself on being a beacon of democracy, so President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, who boasts a long track-record as a human rights lawyer, must intervene and impress on lawmakers that democracy demands the protection of all, including social and sexual minorities, and that legislating “proper human sexual rights and Ghanaian family values” flies in the face of democratic principles. So far, he seems to have abdicated his leadership on this matter in deference to the religious and cultural lobby.

Even as human rights advocates continue to push against the passage of the bill it is important that organizations such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) also live up to their mandate by taking proactive steps to defend the rights of vulnerable and marginalized citizens. Regardless of social disapproval, these constitutional bodies must have the courage to mount a vigorous public education campaign against stigma and victimization of people whose fundamental human rights, though guaranteed in Ghana’s constitution and international instruments the country has signed up to, are being trampled upon because of who they are.

Audrey Gadzekpo

Professor, University of Ghana, Legon

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Anti-LGBTI Bill	Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021
A4CG	Advocates for Christ Ghana
AI	Artificial intelligence
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education
ELF	European Leadership Forum
FOCL	Forum of Christian Leaders
FWI	Family Watch International
IOF	International Organization for the Family
MGL	Multimedia Group Limited
MOTB	Museum of the Bible
NCPHSRFV	National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PCF	Parliamentary Christian Fellowship
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WCF	World Congress of Families

Executive Summary

In 2021, the “Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill” was introduced in the Ghanaian Parliament. The bill, if passed, would criminalize LGBTI people and behavior, as well as those who support their rights, and even those who report on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) issues. In a region with many punitive anti-LGBTI bills, the Ghanaian version stands out for its cruelty and extremism. It would suppress not only fundamental human rights to dignity, privacy, non-discrimination, and freedom from cruel and inhuman treatment, but also the freedom of speech, expression, association, and assembly.

The bill drew heated reactions from both detractors and supporters. The latter, mostly religious leaders and conservative politicians, aired their regressive anti-LGBTI views freely. Their opinions were amplified by rightwing media in Ghana, which regularly vilifies gay people and peddles in sensationalist and false reporting. This hostile digital landscape existed before the bill was introduced, and it worsened after, creating a violent environment, both on and offline, for LGBTI people.

While there has been significant national and international media coverage of the bill, what is less understood is who is driving promotion of the bill, and the accompanying harmful public debate. This report seeks to fill that knowledge gap, identifying who is behind the external anti-LGBTI influence, detailing connections between Ghanaian leaders and conservative foreign groups, and showing how anti-LGBTI rhetoric, and social and other media traffic, are being shaped and driven by these interests.

In recent years, U.S. anti-rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sought to capitalize on and influence existing anti-LGBTI and anti-sexual and reproductive rights sentiment and policy in Ghana. This report includes an in-depth analysis and timeline of U.S.-based groups intervening in Ghanaian politics and society, including well-known extremist NGOs like the International Organization of the Family (IOF), Family Watch International (FWI), and CitizenGO, among others.

This overview is followed by an analysis of online coverage and content related to LGBTI rights in Ghana over a five-year period, from 2016 to 2021, the year

the anti-LGBTI bill was first introduced. We detail the dynamics of the digital space where Ghanaian anti-LGBTI rhetoric has been increasingly influenced and amplified by foreign actors. The research and findings are based on a comprehensive study of public engagement around the bill using machine learning and experienced analysts commissioned by Ipas and carried out by Signify Group. This review shows how Ghanaian anti-LGBTI organizations, like Advocates for Christ Ghana, and certain media and political personalities, are linked to U.S.-based NGOs; and it outlines the foreign ties of some domestic anti-LGBTI media groups to parent networks in Belarus and South Africa.

Where does all this anti-LGBTI activism lead? While the bill awaits a vote, it is already taking a personal toll; police raids, harassment, intimidation, and violence against LGBTI people on the rise. Still, analysis of online coverage does provide some hopeful signs; our findings also show that following some cases of anti-LGBTI violence, engagement with LGBTI-related coverage inside Ghana has skewed more positively, in one case moving from 19% to 35% positive, suggesting that many web users do not approve of anti-LGBTI action by police and legislators.

Together, our findings show that:

- Support for the anti-LGBTI bill and mounting hostility against the Ghanaian LGBTI community are manufactured by both domestic and international religious groups, and U.S.-based evangelical organizations are funding homophobia in Ghana;
- The Ghanaian president and members of his government have liaised with foreign anti-LGBTI business executives, including at international right-wing “family policies” events;
- Ghanaian religious leaders, including the Ghanaian Archbishop, have close ties to former U.S. President Donald Trump, anti-LGBTI religious personalities, and some Ghanaian pastors have received funding from an evangelical network in the United States;
- Many anti-LGBTI media in Ghana are owned by non-Ghanaian consortiums including from Belarus and South Africa. These foreign-owned, for-profit media networks are incentivized to promote extremism and distrust by the algorithmic bias of large social media platforms toward conflict;

- The 2019 World Congress of Families event in Accra was sponsored by some of these media partners and brought together global and local activists, providing an impetus to transition from resisting the expansion of LGBTI rights, to actively attacking these rights; and,
- Ghanaian anti-LGBTI networks are using tactics that reveal foreign influence.

As of March 2023, the anti-LGBTI bill is still pending in the Ghanaian parliament. This delay has caused anxiety for its proponents who are pushing for a second reading of the bill with the expectation that it will pass before the 2024 presidential elections.

This report provides recommendations for the application of this research, primarily to continue exposing the origins of anti-LGBTI hatred in Ghana to a wider public, including civil society and LGBTI allies. The report includes guidance on supporting LGBTI rights and reclaiming the narrative from homophobic politicians and other personalities to demonstrate that reactionary narratives against LGBTI rights are not universal in Ghana.

Key recommendations include:

- Changing political narratives by demonstrating that support for LGBTI rights has increased and the balance of public opinion has shifted toward tolerance. Evidence of engagement with pro-LGBTI content and the demonstrable impact of foreign anti-rights influence should be highlighted.
- Underscoring that Ghana was on a positive, constitutional, and international human rights trajectory in the 1990s and early 2000s, with some improvement for LGBTI people. The World Congress of Families in 2019 is recognized as a critical, harmful turning point for LGBTI rights.
- Exposing anti-LGBTI Ghanaian organizations and personalities by highlighting how their reactionary and homophobic viewpoints are not universal in Ghana, and that they are influenced by foreign groups.

- Promoting supportive LGBTI discourse; equality, inclusion, diversity, and non-discrimination is critical in online forums. Additionally, flagging hate speech and incitement to violence to social media platform moderators.
- Conducting further investigations of the ties between U.S.-based organizations, particularly private funding between foreign groups and the Ghanaian anti-LGBTI movement and key actors, including media fueling homophobic content is necessary.
- Finally, as recommended by other human rights groups, extending official invitations to the UN independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the special rapporteur on human rights defenders and focal point on reprisals in Africa of the Africa Commission on Human and People's Rights.

The organizational tactics and rapid growth of repressive, anti-LGBTI activism in Ghana, and the accrual of political and media support follows a well-rehearsed playbook. As with the expansion of anti-comprehensive sexuality education, and anti-sexual and reproductive health networks in Africa, counter tactics include lifting the veil on the main actors. However, a more important focus is to build better and stronger networks and support for LGBTI rights at the legislative, media, and community level. Part of that work is exposing the networks detailed in this report for what they are—but the work of building pro-LGBTI support is a much bigger piece and there are grounds for optimism in the evidence.

Introduction

On October 10, 2022, Sam George,¹ a member of the Ghanaian parliament, posted a Facebook message to his 78,000 followers writing, “I am currently in Utah, USA attending an African Family Policy Conference.” George, a young, British-educated parliamentarian, has made his mark in Ghana by drafting and leading the promotion of one of the most brutal anti-LGBTI bills in the region. He proudly noted that his bill was being “celebrated by participants at the [Utah] conference.”

While George’s 2021 bill, *Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values* (the anti-LGBTI bill discussed throughout this report), may be a homegrown initiative that purports to defend Ghanaian tradition and culture, it has been nurtured and, to some extent funded, by interests outside of the country, including by the organizers of the Utah meeting. There has been significant national and international media coverage of the anti-LGBTI bill, its sponsors, and its impact on the daily life and security of LGBTI people in Ghana. What is less understood is who is behind the foreign influence on both the Ghanaian government and civil society fueling anti-LGBTI sentiment.

Arguably, the first foreign interference in Ghana was the Portuguese, who came in the fifteenth century for economic reasons, and who left behind a religious legacy through the work of Christian missionaries. More recently, Ghana’s independence from the United Kingdom in 1957 played out against the backdrop of the Cold War and increased Soviet and U.S. expansion in West Africa.² The vacuum left by Britain in Ghana created a contested space for external spheres of influence.

Today, Ghana is still a site for foreign support—including overseas development aid—and intervention, including on social and religious issues. Some of these interventions are state-led, as is the case with Russia. Others are directed by U.S. anti-rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to capitalize on and influence existing anti-LGBTI and anti-sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) sentiment and policy.

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1. George represents the Ningo-Prampram constituency of the Greater Accra Region.
 2. This was the same year the Wolfenden Report was issued in Great Britain, recommending that consensual same-sex relations not be criminalized. England and Wales eventually decriminalized homosexuality in 1967.

Ghana's 1992 constitution provides significant human rights protections and in the last two decades the country has undergone a rapid expansion of personal freedom, quality public education, and healthcare. The constitution provides the right to equality and non-discrimination for all to all its citizens, which includes LGBTI individuals. While the country is majority Christian, it is also a constitutionally secular state that does not privilege one religion. Religious leaders from all communities in Ghana, including Christian, Muslim, and traditional religions, are politically active. In recent years, conservative members of these communities have been outspoken against LGBTI people, and their reactionary views have been amplified by conservative media, which vilifies gay people and peddles in sensationalist and false reporting.

WHAT IS THE ANTI-LGBTI BILL?

First introduced in February 2021, the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill was designed to criminalize LGBTI people and behavior, as well as those who support their rights, going above and beyond Ghana's penal code. The bill prohibits same-sex sexual acts as well as identities; prohibits gender diversity and gender-affirming care; mandates that LGBTI people undergo conversion therapy; subjects intersex people to "gender realignment" surgery; and outlaws same-sex marriage. The bill also criminalizes LGBTI advocacy with five-to-ten year sentences, suppressing not only fundamental human rights to dignity, privacy, non-discrimination, and freedom from cruel and inhuman treatment, but also freedoms of speech, expression, association, and assembly.

For more than 18 months, the bill has been under debate; the first reading was in August 2021. In October 2022, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Godfred Yeboah Dame, issued legal advice on the bill, its constitutionality, and its financial implications. While he criticized some of the bill's clauses, he affirmed that parts passed the test of constitutionality, backing the bill in principle. On December 12, MP Sam George stated that some concessions had been made following Dame's review, including allegedly "removing intersex" and reducing some punishments. However, criminalization of LGBTI advocacy, funding, or sponsorship remain in the text. Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin has claimed the bill will pass before the next presidential election in 2024. It remains to be seen whether that timeline is realistic since, as of December 2022, the committee handling the bill has spent its allocated funding.

Ghana's legal system is another vestige of its British colonial inheritance and the country's 1960 Criminal Offences Act includes Victorian-era language that criminalizes "unnatural carnal knowledge." This ambiguous language is widely interpreted to refer to consensual same-sex relations. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the law is being enforced, as cases at the lower courts are underreported; what is clear is that the mere existence of the law, coupled with

pervasive religious-driven homophobic sentiment, contributes to a hostile and even violent environment for LGBTI people.

This political, legal, and social context can explain the current tensions playing out over protecting human rights and addressing homophobia and violence against LGBTI people. It does not, however, explain the Ghanaian government's harassment of LGBTI people, and its abrogation of its human rights responsibilities when it comes to protecting these citizens.

In February 2021, police raided and shut down the office of LGBT+ Rights Ghana; later, in May, security forces arrested 21 people attending a conference in the city of Ho for “advocating LGBTI activities” and they were subsequently charged with “unlawful assembly.” According to Human Rights Watch, while government agencies like the Ghana Police Force and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice have made some efforts to reach out to LGBTI people, government-led violence, stigma, and discrimination continue.

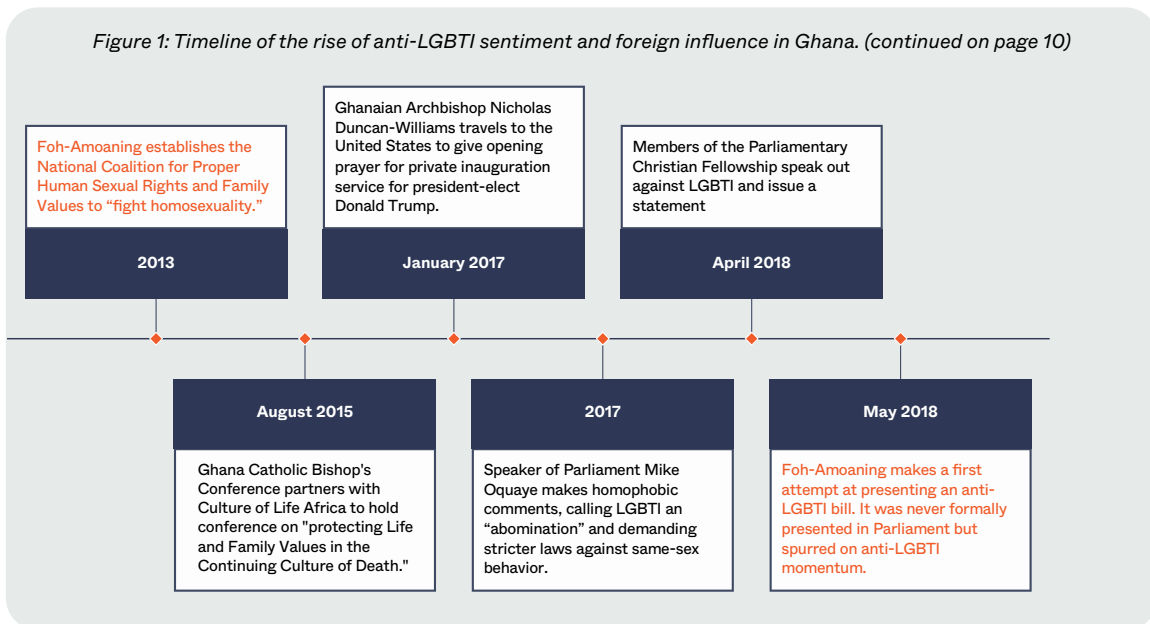
In 2022, OutRight Action International published an in-depth report cataloguing violence and discrimination against LGBTI people in Ghana. They documented attacks against the community that included mob violence, sexual violence, intimidation, stigma, and assault. The report also details how merely introducing the current anti-LGBTI bill led to increases in violence.

Context for the Anti-LGBTI Bill

Opposition to LGBTI rights has been building in Ghana over the last decade, along with more muted opposition to abortion rights. Religious conservative interests largely drive opposition to both issues, which are often conflated with other social and human rights concerns that are considered anathema to their religious dogma, such as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), surrogacy, and contraceptives. There are several expressions of this opposition, including recent harassment and violence against LGBTI individuals. Over the last few years there have also been several high-level public events hosted by religious groups and U.S.-based organizations that have created an enabling environment for Ghanaian stakeholders to advance homophobic language and policies.

The battle lines between foreign and Ghanaian interests on LGBTI rights were first drawn in 2011 when then British prime minister David Cameron, in response to a rise in anti-LGBTI persecution in countries like Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Ghana, warned African leaders that their aid would be limited if they did not revise their laws against homosexuality. In response to Cameron’s warning, then Ghanaian president Evans Atta Mills said “I, as President of this nation will never initiate or support any attempts to legalize homosexuality in Ghana.” This opened the floodgates for a campaign against LGBTI people in Ghana, led in part by Kojo Opong Nkrumah, who was then a talk show host on *Joy FM*, and is today Ghana’s information minister, and an early supporter of the current anti-LGBTI Bill.³

Two years later, one of the most vocal Ghanaian anti-LGBTI activists, Moses Foh-Amoaning, emerged early in the movement. Foh-Amoaning is a Ghanaian lawyer, sports commentator, and a polarizing figure in Ghana who came to prominence on LGBTI issues in 2013 when he founded the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV), which he declared would be “a movement to fight against homosexuality.” He is both the spokesperson and executive secretary for his coalition, which is an ecumenical project that includes the Christian Council of Ghana, Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Ghana Muslims Mission, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, Ghana Baptist Convention, and Ahmadiyya Muslims Mission.



3. As reported by an observer in Ghana to Ipas on February 24, 2023.

In 2015, the Ghana Catholic Bishop’s Conference, in partnership with Culture of Life Africa, held a conference on “Protecting Life and Family Values in the Continuing Culture of Death.” The Ghanaian bishops were clear that considering the question of a “sacramental marriage” was fundamental to promoting a “culture of life.” To that end, they were unequivocal that marriage is between “one man and one woman,” and that any “other unions such as homosexual unions,” should “never be promoted or supported in our society.”

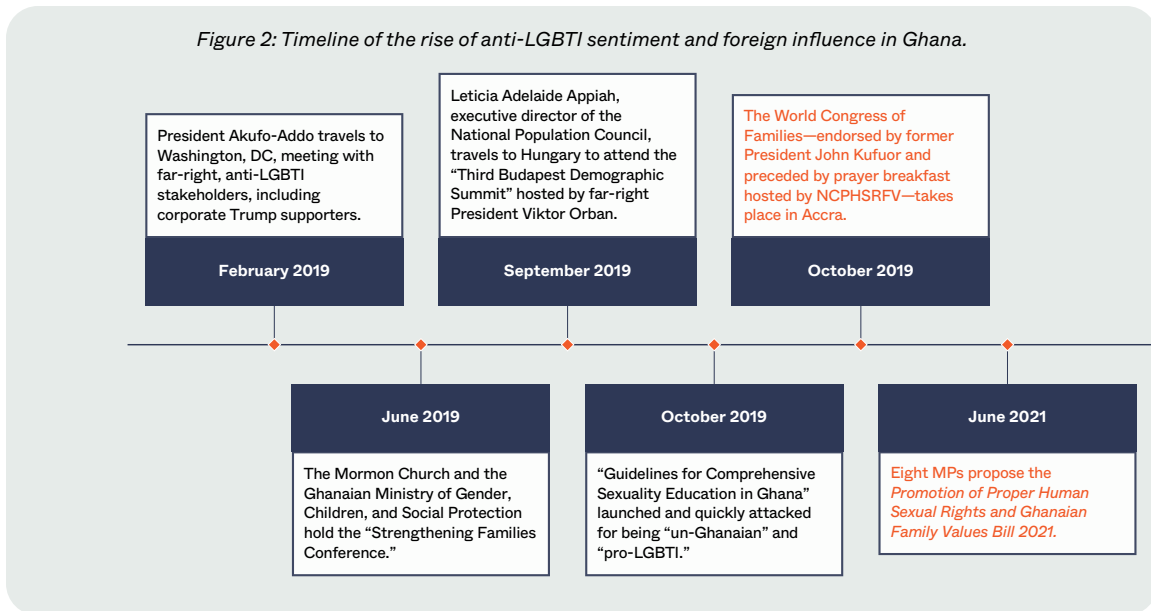
By 2018, Ghanaian legislators were openly agitating against LGBTI people and rights. In April, members of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship (PCF) were outraged when then-British Prime Minister Theresa May issued a public apology for colonial era anti-LGBTI laws, urging Commonwealth countries to consider revising their policies. PCF President Emmanuel Kwasi Bedzrah responded by issuing a statement on behalf of his members to convey their “total disapproval or attempts to promote and pressurize the government of Ghana to accept lesbianism, Gayism, Bisexual and Transgender practices (LGBT) as human rights.”

The following month, in May 2018, Foh-Amoaning, announced that his organization would present an anti-LGBTI bill, the “Comprehensive Solution Based Legislative Framework for Dealing with the Lesbianism Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Phenomenon.” Claiming it was a “researched Afrocentric response to Western European and LGBT groups,” the so-called legislative framework bifurcated gay people into two groups, and designed responses for each demographic: mental health counseling for people who are gay because of “peer pressure, economic reasons,” while those who are LGBTI as a “lifestyle choice” would be prosecuted. This is despite the fact that, as the British colonial era laws demonstrate, the current stigmatization, erasure, and criminalization of LGBTI diversity is a legacy of colonialism.

While that iteration of the bill was never formally presented in Parliament, religious and anti-LGBTI organizations continued gaining momentum throughout 2019. That year, there were a series of anti-LGBTI events as well as notable partnerships between the Ghanaian government and national and international religious groups.

In June 2019, the Mormon Church and the Ghanaian Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection held its first “Strengthening Families Conference” in Ghana. The meeting included over 400 participants from civil society and government, including from Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The

Figure 2: Timeline of the rise of anti-LGBTI sentiment and foreign influence in Ghana.



event was keynoted by Freda Prempeh, the Deputy Minister of the ministry, who was joined by Rebecca Akufo-Addo, the first lady. Prempeh used her speech to describe her government’s partnerships to protect the Mormon vision of a family: “Building strong family ties requires a collaborative effort among institutions such as religious bodies, traditional/opinion leaders, CSOs, NGOs and the government.” She promised the leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that her ministry would “open its doors to you for future collaborations...and ensures the sustainability of the family ties.”⁴

Following the Mormon conference, in September, Leticia Adelaide Appiah, executive director of the National Population Council—the highest statutory body that advises the Ghanaian government on population and related issues—traveled to Hungary to attend the “Third Budapest Demographic Summit” hosted by far-right President Viktor Orbán. Appiah has been outspoken against LGBTI people, claiming that “poor nurturing and child poverty can lure children into the practice of LGBTI acts,” and in Hungary she joined political leaders who shared her views. The summit is a gathering space for government and civil society to connect on regressive “family policies.” Coming on the heels of previous Hungarian demographic gatherings, which included well-known anti-rights organizations, the 2019 Summit marked a shift in the design by pivoting to showcasing high-level government leaders.

4. The Mormon Church’s website explains that “The experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. *The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is*” [emphasis added].

These conservative, anti-rights gatherings took place against the backdrop of a public crisis in Ghana over the release of government guidelines on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in early October. At the time, the government announced it would implement the “Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Ghana” for children 4 to 18 years old. Funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and drafted by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the guidelines were quickly attacked for being “un-Ghanaian” and “peddling a pro-LGBTI agenda.” The Ghana Bishops Conference called on families to reject the guidelines, while the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council called them “satanic” and demanded their immediate withdrawal. Ghana’s chief imam, Sheikh Dr. Osmanu Nuhu Sharubutu, said they were “an attempt to hide behind education reforms to brainwash the pupils with an LGBT agenda.”

While there was plenty of local outrage at the CSE guidelines, foreign entities were also at play, openly inserting themselves in the debate. In arguing against the guidelines as a Western import, critics used as their main source materials developed by a U.S.-based organization, Family Watch International (FWI). FWI, which has a dedicated website against CSE, included a Ghana-specific petition to end all projects with United Nations agencies that implement CSE programs, and also warned that “highly controversial CSE programs pushed by foreign entities are harming Ghana’s children.” With no sense of irony, the petition was signed “Protect Children Ghana Coalition, facilitated by Family Watch.” FWI is the same organization that in 2022 would host the African Family Policy Conference in Utah headlined by Sam George, one of the architects of the anti-LGBTI bill. FWI also played an outsized role in the defining anti-LGBTI event of 2019, the World Congress of Families (WCF), which took place in October in the Accra.

Coalescence of Foreign and Domestic Anti-LGBTI Ideology

Evangelical and Catholic activists, including U.S.-based groups, have waged a long campaign against CSE, abortion, and LGBTI rights not just in Ghana, but also in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and beyond. They often conflate these issues and use contrived outrage about attacks on traditional values or supposed cultural imperialism to create political pressure and push back on basic human rights. Key organizations behind this strategy in Ghana include FWI, the International

Organization for the Family (IOF) and parent organization to WCF, and CitizenGO.⁵ According to an investigation by the Byline Times, U.S. Christian right groups have spent \$20 million in Africa since 2015.



Figure 3: Facebook post by Sam George on October 10, 2022, from Utah where he was attending the FWI-hosted African Family Policy Conference.

These organizations were active at the World Congress of Families event held in Accra in October 2019. Following the controversy over CSE, this gathering marked a turning point in opposition to LGBTI rights in Ghana, with anti-LGBTI activism ramping up significantly. WCF Ghana included the participation of leaders from three key Ghanaian organizations who would subsequently take outspoken positions in support of the 2021 bill: the Church of the Pentecost, Family Renaissance International, and the above-mentioned NCPSRF (after whom the title of the bill was seemingly based). A fourth organization, Advocates for Christ Ghana (A4CG), was set up shortly after the WCF Ghana. Its board chair, Edem Senanu, is one of the credited authors of the anti-LGBTI bill.

Since its first official international gathering in Prague, Czech Republic, in 1997, WCF has promoted its anti-rights agenda through semi-annual global conferences, like the one in Ghana. Historically these were centered in Europe, with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe. However, documents from the Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society’s archives show that the WCF, since at

5. IOF is U.S.-based and is the business name of the Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society. CitizenGO, based in Madrid, Spain, is a petitioning organization that brings together European and U.S. evangelicals along with Russian oligarchs.

least 1999, was coordinating with advocates in Ghana to support their participation in the World Congress of Families.⁶ Correspondence between WCF and Ghanaian activists with the Tema Esperanto Movado in 1999 detail how Tema “would like your organization to have a branch here in Ghana to fight for a common goal to bring the world together in one big world family,” as well as to “constitute laws and policies which would guide the existence of natural families.”⁷ While such a local branch never materialized, subsequent WCF global and regional conferences prioritized countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and since 2015, a growing number in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁸

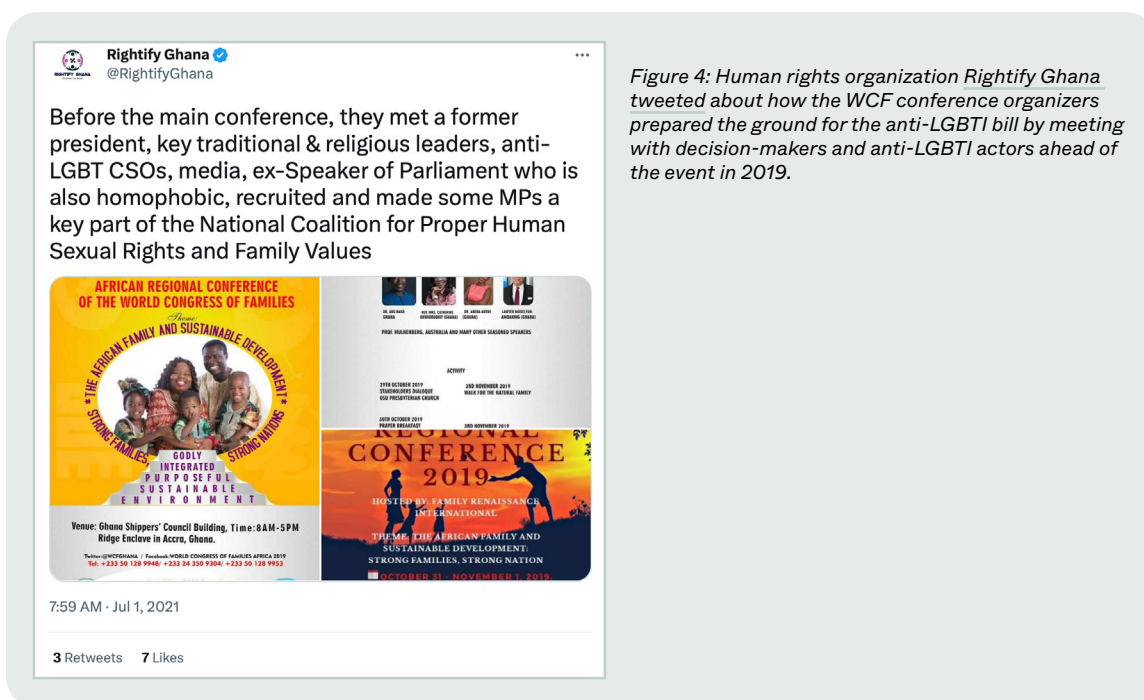


Figure 4: Human rights organization Rightify Ghana tweeted about how the WCF conference organizers prepared the ground for the anti-LGBTI bill by meeting with decision-makers and anti-LGBTI actors ahead of the event in 2019.

The 2019 gathering in Ghana was the last WCF event before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the conference, WCF organizers made connections with government officials, including former Ghanaian presidents John Kufuor and John Mahama, the latter who presented himself as a candidate for the 2020 presidential elections. Two weeks before the WCF Ghana conference, Kufuor endorsed the event.

6. On file with Ipas. Howard Center for the Family, Religion, and Society Records, Northern Illinois University.

7. On file with Ipas. Howard Center for the Family, Religion, and Society Records, Northern Illinois University.

8. The WCF has held regional conferences in Kenya (2015, 2016, 2018); Malawi (2017); Nigerian (2017); and South Africa (2016).

According to researchers who attended WCF Ghana,⁹ Brian Brown, president of IOF, noted in his opening remarks that LGBTI practices should be criminalized because they destroy the so-called “natural family” system.¹⁰ Another WCF presenter, the Ghanaian Speaker of Parliament, Mike Oquaye, shared the dais with Sharon Slater, founder and president of FWI. Oquaye said LGBTI people have a “deviant conduct” that must be addressed medically and psychologically. He had made similar comments in 2017, calling homosexuality an “abomination” and demanding stricter laws against same-sex behavior.

Slater and Oquaye also worked together before the start of WCF. On October 30, 2019, Slater joined Oquaye at parliamentary prayer breakfast hosted by NCPHSRFV, which brought together around 150 people, including high-level members of government and churches. They were also joined by Bill Muehlenberg, an American evangelist who runs his own ministry, CultureWatch. Muehlenberg told the gathered stakeholders that “the laws can do one of three things: prevent, permit, or promote,” and advised that if laws permit homosexuality, then “governments and other coercive bodies quickly start to force this lifestyle down the throats of everyone.”

After the prayer breakfast, Muehlenberg and Slater met with a smaller group, including Oquaye, who Muehlenberg said was a “keen Christian and fully against allowing Ghana to be taken over by the militant homosexual agenda.” Muehlenberg was very clear about the objectives of his visit to Ghana, as he wrote in his blog, “our meeting today was to organise a national response to the inroads of homosexual activism in Ghana.”

And indeed, delegates from the Accra conference “proposed the formation of legal teams to mount constitutional and legal challenges within six months to a year.” This projected calendar was delayed because of the pandemic, but in 2021, an anti-LGBTI bill was finally presented. The timing and extent of lobbying in support of such a regressive piece of legislation strongly suggests that the WCF was a catalyzing event. It also reflects the influence of outside actors who were, if not just encouraging this work to go forward, were also likely advising on how to win political and media support for its passage.

9. On file with Ipas.

10. The concept of the “natural family” espoused by Western NGOs is itself also a vestige of colonialism. Many formerly colonized countries had a long and rich understanding of family, community, clan, or tribe. The nuclear family, functioning as a dissociated self-contained unit, is a Western, patriarchal, colonial construct that goes against many traditional forms and definitions of family.

International Political Exchanges

The proposed anti-LGBTI bill in Ghana is not without precedent. At least 68 countries have national laws criminalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults, including 32 African countries, most through colonial-era laws imbedded in criminal codes. In the last 15 years, several countries have introduced bills to increase criminal penalties. The most infamous, the *Anti-Homosexuality Bill*, also known as “Kill the Gays” bill, was introduced in Uganda’s Parliament in 2009; two years later Ugandan LGBTI activist, David Kato, was murdered. The bill was met with widespread international condemnation, and much of the focus—and ire—was centered on the influence of the U.S. Christian right in drafting the bill.

A similar dynamic is playing out in Ghana, where foreign-based Christian right organizations have been active in the years leading up to the 2021 introduction of the anti-LGBTI bill. At the same time, prominent leaders within Ghana’s religious and political elite have a mutually enriching relationship with their conservative counterparts in the United States. This starts at the executive levels of government.

When Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo was elected president in 2016, he announced he would build a national cathedral in Accra to thank God for his win. To fulfill his promise, and to finance this project, he travelled to Washington, DC, in 2019 and hosted a fundraiser at the Museum of the Bible (MOTB). There, he sat next to Steven Green, CEO of the U.S. company Hobby Lobby, which founded the MOTB. Hobby Lobby is aggressively anti-LGBTI, and, according to various reports, is involved with and possibly funding the Accra Cathedral.

Akufo-Addo was introduced to Green by the Ghanaian Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, who has fostered close ties with the U.S. Christian right and has publicly supported the anti-LGBTI bill. In March 2021, Duncan-Williams was scheduled as a keynote speaker at a Ghanaian national prayer rally on the theme of “Homosexuality: A Detestable Sin to God.” The event was organized by the NCPHSRFV.

SR Sahara Reporters 
@SaharaReporters

Christian Clerics In Ghana Organise National Prayer Against Same-Sex Union | Sahara Reporters
The programme tagged, 'Homosexuality: A detestable sin to God,' held at the Church of Pentecost Burma Camp Worship Center.
READ MORE: bit.ly/3Ijjs3R



2:35 AM · Mar 23, 2021

Figure 5: Sahara Reporters (@SaharaReporters) shared the flyer for the March 2021 anti-LGBTI national prayer breakfast hosted by NCPHSRFV on Twitter.

A few years earlier, in January 2017, Duncan-Williams had travelled to the United States to give the opening prayer at a private inauguration service with then president-elect Donald Trump and vice president-elect Mike Pence. He was joined by other religious leaders, including Jerry Falwell Jr., who three years later, in 2020, following a sex scandal, would resign from Liberty University, a private evangelical college.

Like Archbishop Duncan-Williams, President Akufo-Addo is also linked to Liberty University, which has a history of open hostility to LGBTI students and concerns. In 2022, the university came under intense scrutiny when it changed its student code to explicitly condemn gay relationships and trans and nonbinary gender identification. In April 2021 Akufo-Addo spoke at Liberty University’s Equity for Africa conference, where he was joined by David Brat, the dean of Liberty’s School of Business and a former Republican congressman. Though his trip had to be rescheduled, Akufo-Addo was planning to return to Liberty University a few months later, in September, to discuss “how the Christian worldview influences his decision-making.”

Online Promotion of the Anti-LGBTI Bill

In addition to the historical connections provided above, this investigation also sought to understand to what extent anti-LGBTI discourse was being elevated online; to identify the sources and promoters of anti-LGBTI rhetoric in the country; and specifically trace the roots of the narratives around the 2021 anti-LGBTI bill. Quantitative methods, described below, were used by Signify to assess the public interest in Ghana on LGBTI rights, and how support for or against the LGBTI community has trended during the past five years.

To carry out this work, researchers from Signify focused on public data from online sources to understand the main actors creating and promoting anti-LGBTI and anti-SRHR content and campaigns in Ghana and how such content was being circulated and shared—known as digital engagement. It was also important to understand the extent of media and public support for these regressive campaigns.

Digital Engagement on LGBTI Rights in Ghana

In 2022, internet penetration in Ghana surpassed 50%, with just 26% of the population active on social media—however that figure is steadily climbing by 30% annually. Increased social media use has been accompanied by growing interest in issues such as LGBTI rights and CSE, accompanied by related online conflict and misinformation. A unique complicating factor in Ghana has been the emergence of organized online agitators who produce often inaccurate information, if not outright disinformation. These agitators—known as content farms and troll networks—working inside Ghana have spread viral disinformation as far afield as the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Other, local networks have also emerged that focus on culture wars and controversy as a tool to drive engagement, attention, and revenue for their respective platforms.

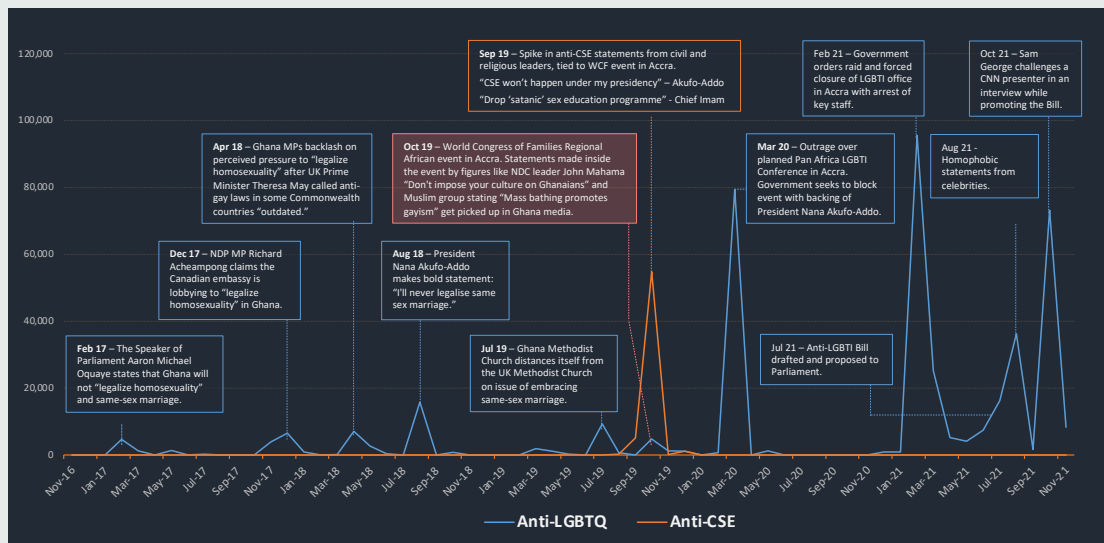


Figure 6: Publicly available media coverage and public engagement data suggests a shift in 2019 in the behavior of opponents to LGBTI rights—from opposing increased freedoms for the LGBTI community to engaging in active anti-LGBTI campaigns and legislative efforts.

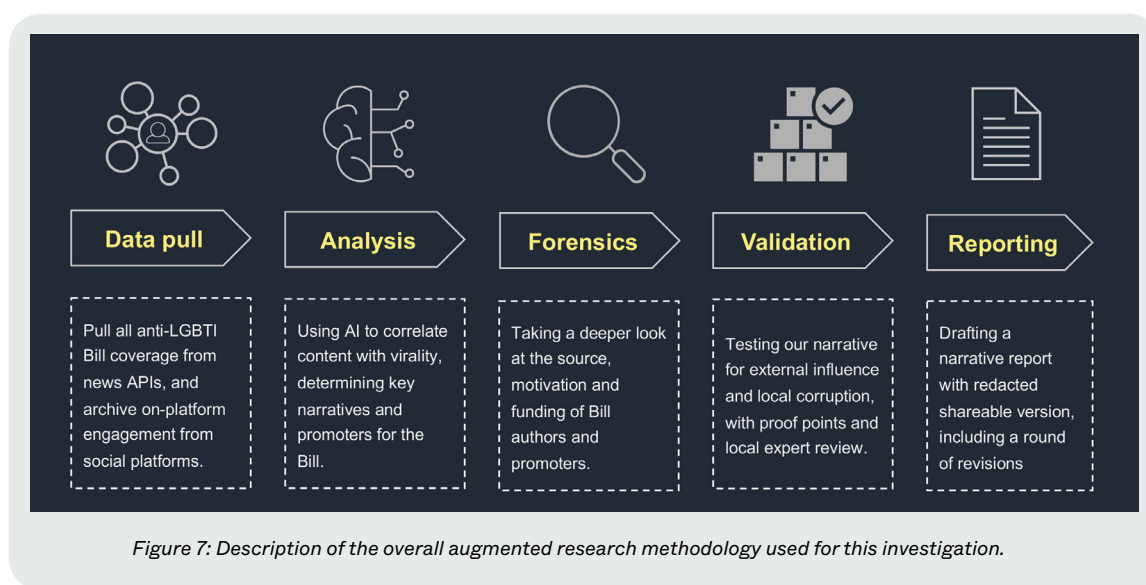
Digital engagement is not a complete, accurate barometer of public opinion. Subjects like LGBTI rights are comparatively taboo in terms of public discussion and those who choose to engage skew younger and more progressive. Reactionary forces are also at their most extreme online, and public social media is where they can emerge to recruit support for their worldview and for specific campaigns. Therefore, the discourse is not entirely representative of wider views. However, online engagement is a significant predictor of public, media, and political trends. There are three reasons social media is useful for tracking and anticipating anti-LGBTI narratives:

1. Social media data provides a useful barometer of public interest in SRHR issues and opposition narratives, despite skew.
2. Machine learning allows us to model the most effective channels, formats, and personalities that gain attention and change opinion.
3. Though opposition networks operate in the shadows, they emit public signals when they build networks, launch campaigns, or recruit support.

Media analysis is used to give a sense of public opinion and evaluate how effective various digital tactics and narratives are in terms of swaying public, media, and political support. It is worth noting that, within Ghana, most of the

content—77% of online engagement—came after the February 2021 LGBTI center police raids in Accra, detailed above. However, the longer range afforded by Signify’s machine learning tools enabled the research team to uncover interesting turning points earlier in 2019.

The Signify research team used proprietary machine learning technology that enables a comprehensive study of all relevant published material. Researchers are able to gather, read, and classify vast amounts of original content and online reaction relating to key topics and levels of public interest within a topic.¹¹ Any significant coverage or campaigns are validated with local expertise, and researchers also manually validate the alignment (pro- or anti-LGBTI) of any content or campaign with viral traction inside or outside Ghana. The system parses viral coverage to pick out the most popular stories, spokespeople, and tropes within coverage—and who published or promoted each narrative or campaign.¹²



Pro-LGBTI Shift in Public Opinion

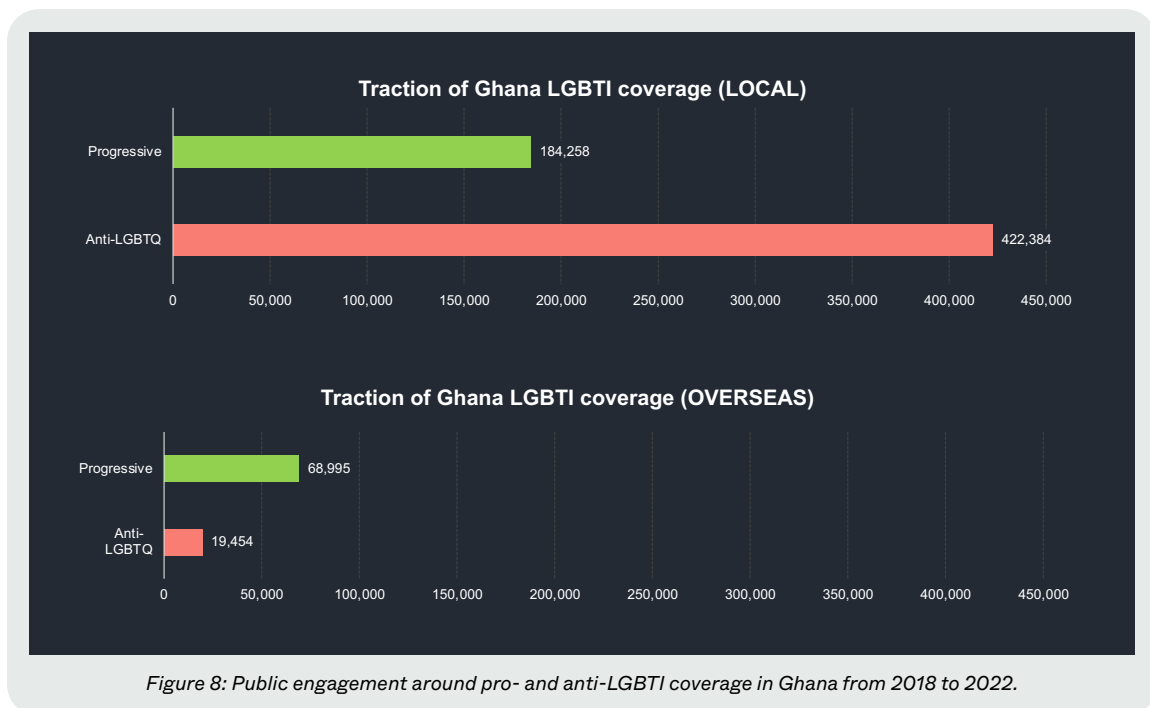
Signify examined overall public opinion around LGBTI issues in Ghana, in terms of both domestic and global engagement, over the last five years. Based on 727 pieces of content and 695,901 shares, it was observed that the Ghanaian public

11. Researchers then proceed to a forensic analysis of sources, supporter networks, and funding using Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) techniques detailed in subsequent sections.
 12. For more details on this technology please see Annex II on the ShareScore methodology.

was much more receptive to and engaged with homophobic, anti-LGBTI content than pro-LGBTI content in the 2018 to 2022 period (see figure 7 below).

The analysis revealed that:

- Over the past five years, anti-LGBTI coverage has gained more traction inside Ghana;
- LGBTI rights are a relatively significant issue in Ghana with over half a million engagements over five years, but most of these taking place since 2021; and,
- The diaspora and global engagement with LGBTI issues in Ghana skews progressive but does not outweigh negativity inside Ghana.



One of the more positive aspects of the report is the digital swing in favor of LGBTI since the crackdown. This was revealed by comparing online content and engagement since the police raids described above with the preceding years (see Figure 8 below). This increase in support for the LGBTI community in Ghana applies not only to the global audience, with a huge rallying of support from diaspora and other progressives, but also internally. While inside Ghana there has been significant public approval for the oppression of the LGBTI community, support for the LGBTI community—as indicated by engagement with pro-LGBTI content for the purpose of this report—has also increased.

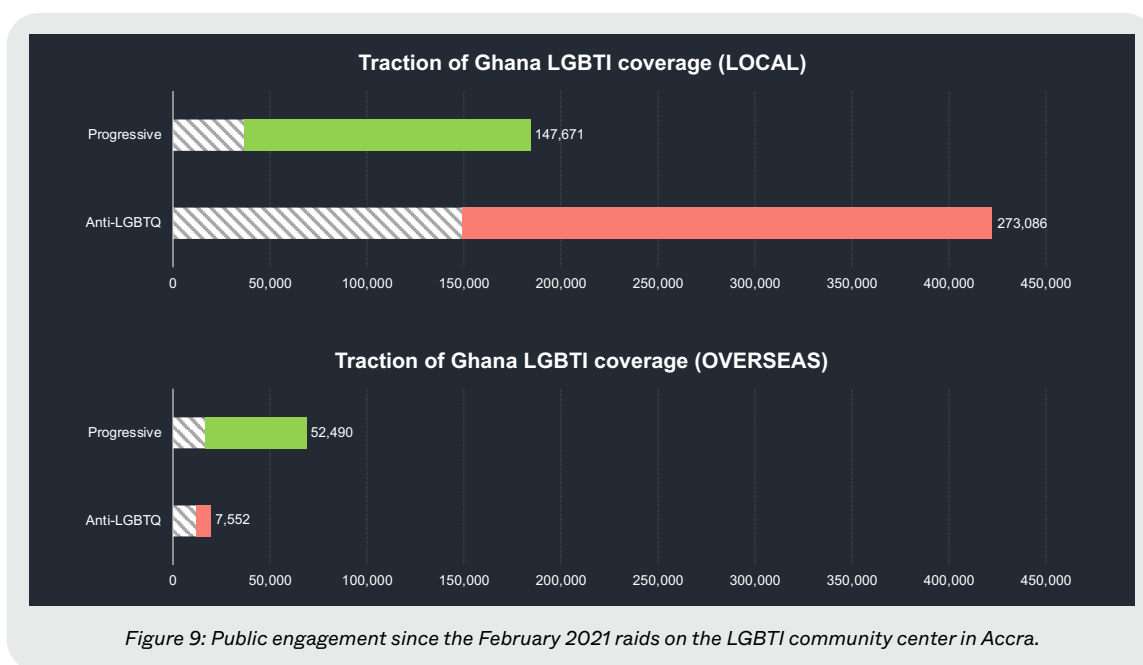


Figure 9: Public engagement since the February 2021 raids on the LGBTI community center in Accra.

The balance of public opinion has in fact shifted toward tolerance for the LGBTI community. The evidence demonstrates that:

- Most coverage and engagement around the issue has happened since the police raid and closure of an LGBTI community center in Accra in 2021.
- Since the incident, engagement with LGBTI-related coverage inside Ghana has skewed more positively (35% positive) than pre-raid (19%), suggesting many web users do not approve of anti-LGBTI action by police and legislators.
- This increased percentage of pro-LGBTI engagement is mirrored in international coverage and engagement with an increase from 58% to 87% pro-LGBTI.

This phenomenon—where a gradual rise in hate speech and attacks on a particular population goes under the radar for a long period of time but provokes a negative reaction from the wider public when the campaign finally results in action by politicians or law enforcement—is recognizable in other contexts of human rights violations.

Drivers of Public Attention on LGBTI Issues

Signify used Natural Language Classifiers—a form of artificial intelligence (AI) that can read and classify text—to extract and tally up the key concepts and personalities from the most viral online coverage, looking at global and domestic Ghanaian coverage of LGBTI issues. Of note, outside Ghana:

- Concern around human rights and the safety of the LGBTI community—and related coverage of police crackdowns and arrests—dominated global engagement.
- “Donation” is a significant concept within the international coverage, with progressive organizations encouraging donors to support their cause in the wake of the 2021 flashpoints.

Within Ghana, key concepts were broadly similar:

- Human rights and legal crackdowns dominated domestic coverage of LGBTI issues, but with a much more anti-LGBTI skew on coverage and engagement.
- Actors and celebrities have been drawn into public condemnation of LGBTI rights and freedoms either from personal conviction or after being pressured to comment by right wing media.
- Religious faith plays a significant role in domestic discussion, overwhelmingly contributing to anti-LGBTI engagement.

The research additionally surfaced the key personalities featured in the most engaged-with content, and additional research provided details on the context of their involvement. Those against the anti-LGBTI Bill, who are pro-LGBTI advocates included: footballer Michael Essien; journalist Ignatius Annor; lawyer Akoto Ampaw; and TV presenter and long-time LGBTI advocate Sister Derby.

The key personalities supporting the anti-LGBTI Bill include actor Prince David Osei; radio DJ Captain Smart; and, the Bill’s sponsor, Sam George. Additional political supporters include Alban Bagbin, the Speaker of the House. A key link for this research is Moses Foh-Amoaning of the NCPHSRFV, which shares its name with the Bill. Our digital review found that outside Ghana, only right-wing evangelicals have offered support for the Bill, including CitizenGO, the WCF, and Brian Brown and Sharon Slater.

Online Forensics of Anti-LGBTI Promotion

Ghana’s anti-LGBTI bill is portrayed by supporters as a defense of traditional Ghanaian values, but this is a distortion. The bill reflects fundamentalist beliefs nurtured by far-right groups in the United States, Europe, and Russia. Though Ghanaians are conservative about LGBTI issues, most of the online vocal support for the bill is attributable to foreign-owned channels and activists.



Figure 10: Map linking organizational support and mentorship from foreign groups to Ghana, as well as financial support between U.S. evangelicals and the anti-LGBTI bill authors.

Signify employed Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) to learn how anti-LGBTI activity is mentored and funded, uncovering links to funders and activists in the United States and Europe. This report details not only technical, practical, and campaign support but evidence of financial sponsorship from U.S. evangelicals to anti-LGBTI activists and organizers.

This research began with a search of public online sources for identifiable authors and promoters of the anti-LGBTI bill. These were easily identifiable. Once identified, OSINT techniques were used to plot out the historic activities, motivations and connections of key authors and supporters for the bill, looking for intersections between people of interest and evidence of support from global networks outside

Ghana. Sources include staff lists; board members; tax returns; sitemaps and web admin lists; social media team; crowd funding pages; promotional materials; coverage or interest from abroad.

Most of the links we found were explicit. International solidarity and cross-border funding are recognized strengths of the religious right and these links are usually highlighted rather than hidden. Many of the connections in our global network were first discovered as logos on the bottom of event flyers or public messages of solidarity and support between organizations. The World Congress of Families event in Accra in 2019, highlighted throughout this report, proved useful in drawing connections between key individuals and networks since most opposition groups active in Ghana appear to have been inspired by or involved in that event. Within the time available, Signify sought to validate connections between different groups using photographic evidence, web diaries, event agendas and other public evidence trails, trying to establish who influenced the content, and promotion of the bill.

Signify found that several Ghanaian pastors who are deeply involved in promoting the anti-LGBTI bill have received funding from an evangelical network in the United States known as the Forum of Christian Leaders (FOCL, U.S.-based), which is an outgrowth of the European Leadership Forum (ELF), an evangelical network run by Greg Pritchard. ELF has a network of NGOs that fundraise for pastors in Europe and Africa and they provide significant funds as well as education and training to pastors in Ghana and worldwide.¹³ To date, it appears that these donations were declared and above board and not specifically linked to other activist organizations.

FOCL established donation pages to fund two pastors—Julius Coomson and Nana Yaw Offei Awufu—both members of the Legon Interdenominational Church. Both also sit on the board of Advocates for Christ Ghana (A4CG), the organization chaired by one of the anti-LGBTI bill’s authors, Edem Senanu, that was set up shortly after the 2019 WCF. Since the launch of the anti-LGBTI bill in 2021, Senanu’s group A4CG has been a leading promoter of the bill. Both men spent

13. Operational since 2000, ELF is openly anti-LGBTI, and staunchly opposed to CSE, contraception, and SRHR.

years in the United States studying under the sponsorship of FOCL.¹⁴ Nana Yay Offei Awuku also worked from 2016-2018 as a regional director of FOCL's affiliated Lausanne Movement in East Africa.

Senanu is an ally of WCF conference organizer Moses Foh-Amoaning,¹⁵ and keynote WCF speakers including Theresa Okafor, Foundation for African Cultural Heritage, and Anne Kioko of CitizenGO. Senanu is one of the two credited authors of the anti-LGBTI bill. The other credited author is MP Sam George, but there is no evidence he attended the event in Accra.

In May 2021, Senanu's organization, A4CG, launched a petition on CitizenGO's platform to gather support for the anti-LGBTI bill, reaching halfway to their goal of 20,000 signatures. The use of petitions to create political pressure is a key part of the playbook promoted by activist leaders from the United States, including by Sharon Slater of FWI and Brian Brown of IOF and WCF, both of whom were keynote speakers at WCF19 in Accra. It should be noted that Brown sits on CitizenGO's board of trustees. In a CNN interview Brown denied being involved in drafting of the bill but admitted to playing a role in inspiring the bill's authors.¹⁶

CitizenGO is a favorite platform for anti-rights activists as it comes with an inbuilt global audience of Catholics, Evangelicals, and even Russian Orthodox activists. Since CitizenGo petitions benefit from immediate exposure to an international community of supporters, many of the signatories for the Ghana petition are likely based in the United States and Europe.

14. Since Signify's initial investigation beginning in January 2022, both grantee profiles on FOCL have been taken down, though they are permanently archived. Coomson: <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:hbpji-1Hn2cJ:https://support.euroleadership.org/amo-team/julius-coomson/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari>, and Awuku: <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:R6hroRgPCXgJ:https://support.euroleadership.org/amo-team/nana-yaw-offei-awuku/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari>. A network profile for Awuku is still live as well as permanently archived. Live; <https://foclonline.org/users/nyaw>, and archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220406194647/https://foclonline.org/users/nyaw>
15. Foh-Amoaning and Senanu offer mutual support to each other across multiple campaigns, for instance the recent A4CG campaign (in May of 2022) to "reclaim rainbow colours" which was publicised with glowing support from Foh-Amoaning: <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1160976/anti-lgbtqi-groups-reaffirm-rainbow-colours.html>
16. Additionally, Sharon Slater appeared in this Ghana TV interview before the bill was published discussing LGBTI rights, sex education and more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=261PZrz7SwQ>.

Anti-LGBTI Media Support

A key factor driving the spike in anti-LGBTI content and engagement in Ghana has been the promotion of hate speech and divisive content by web and radio platforms that are optimized for controversy. To some degree this has always been the case with public media, that debate drives engagement. However, there is no question that content which vilifies a particular person or group performs better than blander, but less harmful coverage on the main social media platforms.

FOREIGN MEDIA NETWORKS PUSHING ANTI-LGBTI CONTENT:

Genesis: Belorussian-owned network that runs some of the biggest sites in Kenya and Nigeria with a significant footprint in Ghana. Although its owners are ultra-conservative, the main motive for pushing divisive narratives appears to be viral growth in engagement. While they own one of the more virulent sites in Ghana, *Yen.com*, this group is less significant than MGL, below.

MGL: Though with a Ghanaian chairman and many Ghanaians on its board of directors, MGL is majority-owned by a South African consortium. The network of owned stations and

websites is staunchly conservative and religious and has consistently pushed back on LGBTI rights. Most of this content falls short of breaking the terms of service on Facebook or YouTube, however they often carry sensationalized stories and give positive exposure and airtime to proponents of the anti-LGBTI bill. The network was also advertised as the “media partner” for WCF 2019 in Accra. The group has a long track record which includes MGL’s sensationalized coverage of a “gay conference” in 2006 that led to a crackdown on the event.

The WCF event in 2019 was sponsored by several supposedly local radio stations and their holding company, Multimedia Group Limited (MGL). This network, especially *Joy FM* radio and *MyJoyOnline*, have been prominent supporters of the bill. Although run by a Ghanaian, the network is wholly owned by South African investors and appears to have grown exponentially over the past decade by consistently stoking cultural controversy (with a recent focus on vaccines).

Several websites were identified as consistent promoters of the anti-LGBTI bill and its spokespeople, as well as sensationalized anti-LGBTI content. These include *Yen.com*, *Adom Online*, and *MyJoyOnline*. In particular, Joy Online, Joy FM, and Joy News are three outlets that have consistently provided a platform for supporters of the anti-LGBTI bill. These networks leverage conventional social media, especially Facebook and YouTube, to increase their audience, which

offers a possible avenue for redress, though most of what is published falls within the platform's governance that permits free speech and a degree of anti-LGBTI sentiment on religious grounds. Another significant factor in terms of pushback is that many anti-LGBTI sites are owned by non-Ghanaian consortia.

Groups like these are motivated primarily by profits and growth and present an opportunity to engage Google (its parent company, Alphabet, owns YouTube, among others) and Meta (parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) around the way their algorithms are used to promote growth by exploiting division and how they might improve overall online experience and discourse by downgrading divisive publishers.

Recommendations and Next Steps

There are several potential next steps for the application of this research and the findings set out, primarily to continue exposing the origins of anti-LGBTI hatred in Ghana to a wider public. It is necessary to educate key stakeholders, politicians, advocates, and journalists on the difference between a real grassroots campaign with millions of supporters and an online petition or campaign that uses paid media and global supporters to create a facsimile of public outrage.

The following include guidance on supporting LGBTI rights and reclaiming the narrative from homophobic politicians and other personalities to demonstrate that reactionary narratives against LGBTI rights are not universal in Ghana.

- **Changing political narratives by demonstrating that support for LGBTI rights has increased** and the balance of public opinion has shifted toward tolerance. The evidence in the report on engagement with pro-LGBTI content and the demonstrable impact of foreign anti-rights influence should be highlighted.
- **Stressing that Ghana was on a positive, pro-human rights trajectory** with the 1992 Constitution, 1996 constitutional amendments, and that the

country's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in September 2000 were both positive steps for LGBTI rights. The World Congress of Families in 2019 has been acknowledged as a critical, harmful turning point for the advancement of LGBTI rights, along with the actions and rhetoric of other actors.

- **Exposing anti-LGBTI Ghanaian organizations and personalities by highlighting how their reactionary and homophobic viewpoints are not universal in Ghana**, and that they are influenced by foreign groups; this could include publicly denouncing the colonial activities of foreign actors, including both European- and U.S.-based organizations.
- **Promoting supportive LGBTI discourse, equality, inclusion, diversity, and non-discrimination is critical in online forums.** Additionally, flagging hate speech and incitement to violence to social media platform moderators, as well as providing recommendations to improve governance and content classification.
- **Conducting further investigations of the ties between U.S.-based organizations and the Ghanaian anti-LGBTI movement and key actors**, particularly private funding from foreign groups. This should include continuing investigations to establish any ties between FOCL and WCF or other entities.
- **Revealing the monetary incentives driving media groups fueling homophobic content is necessary.** These actions are key to pushback and expose the networks of external interference working to destabilize human rights protections in Ghana and elsewhere. Interested parties can pitch to media contacts on the bad incentives driving networks like Genesis and MGL. Additionally, working to debunk A4CG and other actors in local media, using their financial and organizational ties to foreign organizations like FOCL.
- Finally, as recommended by other human rights groups, **extending official invitations to human rights experts to further investigate the violence and discrimination suffered by LGBTI people in Ghana and the potential impacts of the anti-LGBTI bill.** This should include the UN independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the special rapporteur on human rights defenders and focal point on reprisals in Africa of the Africa Commission on Human and People's Rights.

The organizational tactics and rapid growth of repressive, anti-LGBTI activism in Ghana, and the accrual of political and media support follows a well-rehearsed playbook. It is heartening to see that although this activism attracts majority support it also bolsters support for LGBTI rights, with overall debate tending slightly toward tolerance.

As seen with the expansion of anti-CSE and anti-SRHR networks in Africa, counter tactics could include exposure and debunking of main actors. However, a more important focus is to build better and stronger networks and support at a legislative, media, and community level. Part of that work is exposing the networks detailed in this report for what they are—but the harder work of building pro-LGBTI support is critical. However, there are grounds for optimism in the evidence.

Annex I: Who's Who

FRAMERS AND PROMOTERS OF THE ANTI-LGBTI BILL

Edem Senanu—Longstanding anti-corruption campaigner, chair of Advocates for Christ Ghana (A4CG), Senanu is a credited author of the anti-LGBTI bill. He posted the first anti-CSE petition online, which led to a government U-turn on CSE. Senanu also posted a petition in support of the anti-LGBTI Bill on CitizenGO, which was promoted by Sharon Slater, Brian Brown, Tessy Ofakor, and Anne Kioko.

Sam George—MP for Ningo-Prampram of the National Democratic Congress, George is the lead author and proponent of the anti-LGBTI bill. He is an outspoken homophobe who has achieved international notoriety for threatening to physically fight foreign diplomats and journalists who criticize Ghana's regressive politics. Recognized by his peers as the MP of the year (2021) for his tireless work promoting the anti-LGBTI bill and is connected to U.S. anti-rights groups through Onyinah and Foh-Amoaning (below).

Moses Foh-Amoaning—General Secretary of the National Coalition of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values, Foh-Amoaning is a lawyer and the leader of the organization that lends its name to the bill. Moses is an associate and friend of both men credited as authors of the bill: Edem Senanu (above) and Sam George. Foh-Amoaning is an advocate of conversion therapy and was a speaker at WCF Accra.

Opoku Onyinah—Former leader, Church of the Pentecost, he is a grandee who sits on boards at the University and the Cathedral in Accra. Onyinah's church is a longstanding opponent of LGBTI rights and is a supporter of George. Onyinah was also a key organizer of the WCF event in Accra and sits on the board of Foh-Amoaning's NCPHSRFV.

Julius Coomson—He and other LIC pastor Nana Yaw Offei Awuku are both funded by the FOCL. Coomson and Awaku both sit on the Board of A4CG.

KEY GHANAIAN SUPPORTERS

Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo—Current president of Ghana since January 2017. In 2020, he was re-elected for his second term, which will end in January 2025.

Alban Bagbin—Current Speaker of Parliament who has also served as Minister for Health.

Prince David Osei—Prominent Ghanaian actor, model, producer, director, and philanthropist.

Captain Smart (Blessed Godsbrain Smart)—radio DJ and TV presenter who hosts the morning show Maakye on Onua FM/TV.

Tessy Okaforz—Foundation for African Cultural Heritage and Qardaan, and Ghana WCF Woman of the Year 2016 for her work opposing CSE in Nigeria and beyond.

Lawrence Tetteh Pastor—who has called out other religious leaders for not supporting the Bill.

Catherine Onwioduokit—Family Renaissance International Ghana-based anti-CSE champion.

Akawasi Osei—Chief of Mental Health Authority who attended WCF 2019.

Alex Kodwo Kom Annan—Ghanaian Deputy Minister of Health who also attended WCF 2019.

FOREIGN INFLUENCERS

Sharon Slater—Founder and president of FWI which has sponsored over 100 websites and campaigns opposing CSE, reproductive freedom, human rights, and LGBTI rights. Slater is a primary organizer of evangelical intervention in Africa and other regions, and is a mentor to local figures in Ghana, Kenya, and beyond. She is also a board member of anti-rights group Political Network for Values.

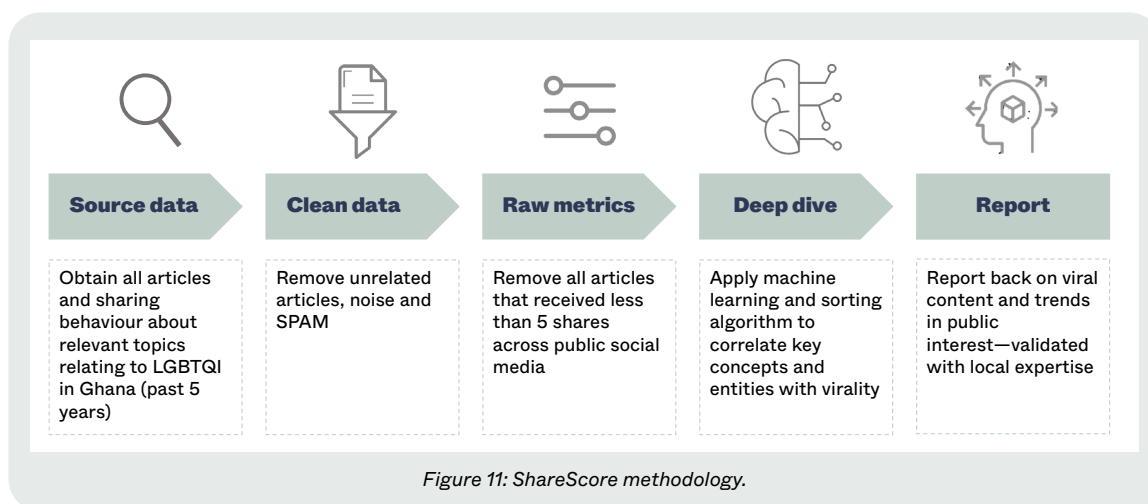
Brian Brown—Leader of the IOF and WCF and a key instigator of pushback on SRHR, mentoring activists and supporting regional events in Africa for the past decade.

Anne Kioko—Campaigns Director for Africa and the United Nations at CitizenGO and one of the foremost anti-rights organizers in Kenya. Her recruitment of preachers, politicians, and local business organizations has created a formidable opposition in Kenya. Kioko is a keynote attendee at WCF and CitizenGO events all over Africa and the United States where she shares her approach and network with emergent groups. Kioko appeared as a keynote speaker at the WCF event in Ghana in 2019.

Appendix II: ShareScore Methodology

ShareScore is a proprietary AI-driven technology for analysis of media coverage and public interest. It is built on the insight that a “share” indicates a much higher level of interest and alignment than a “like” or a “view” or a “comment.” If you “share” something, you care enough about that content to put it in front of friends or colleagues. The system tracks shares across Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Pinterest and also picks up when web users press the “Share” button linking to other messaging or email services.

Signify then uses machine learning to analyze the entities within any piece of widely shared content and determines which topics and personalities interest the public. ShareScore enables the Signify team to read and analyze thousands of pieces of relevant content such as articles, blogs, and videos and to determine which personalities and storylines are driving public interest.



The outputs of ShareScore research include the most important topics (concepts) relating to SRHR, but also the key personalities and institutions (entities) involved in the coverage. Signify then uses link analytics to look at the most prominent shares of each sub-set of content. Then, Signify explores the data in terms of different tactics and tropes, including those known to the team from prior research.

ShareScore allows the team to quickly triage the media landscape around any issue or geography in a matter of days, parsing material that would take traditional researchers months to sift through. The system has been applied in many languages including Italian and German, but also Sheng, Swahili, and Pidgin.

The technology is limited without context. In all projects, Signify works with local researchers and subject matter experts to correctly configure searches and review results. Without the alignment of different publications and the background of key actors and cultural trends, raw engagement numbers cannot reveal what people really think. However, in combination with strong local expertise, ShareScore provides an invaluable way to rapidly assess and quantify the impact of different narratives and find out which publishers are shaping public opinion.

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